

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 887

PS 029 172

AUTHOR Daly, Kerry
TITLE It Keeps Getting Faster: Changing Patterns of Time in Families. Contemporary Family Trends.
INSTITUTION Vanier Inst. of the Family, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 39p.; Includes 1998 General Social Survey data. Also available in French.
AVAILABLE FROM Vanier Institute of the Family, 94 Centrepointe Drive, Nepean, Ontario K2G 6B1, Canada (\$10).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Employed Parents; *Family Life; *Family Work Relationship; Time; *Time Management; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the perceived shortage of time experienced by families today. Following an introduction about the hurried pace of family life, the paper discusses: (1) forces that have shaped the accelerated pace of change (changed families, effects of technology, intensification of work); (2) broadening the conceptualization of time (cyclical patterns, linear patterns, time as an organizational tool, time as values, the politics of time, time as a changing and evolving concept); (3) trends in time use (overall increase in time stress, children's impact on time use, family type effects on time use, gender disparities in time use associated with parenting, importance of employment status for understanding time crunch); and (4) implications of these time trends for understanding family dynamics (gender politics of time in families, children versus parents in the controlling of time, the politics of finding and preserving family time--ideals, reality, and discordance). Contains 29 references. (EV)

ED 449 887

Includes 1998 GSS data

Contemporary Family Trends

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

IT KEEPS GETTING FASTER: CHANGING PATTERNS OF TIME IN FAMILIES

Kerry Daly, University of Guelph

(2000)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE
AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC
COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Mirabelli

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

The Vanier Institute of the Family

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



PS 029172

Contemporary Family Trends is a series of occasional papers authored by leading Canadian experts in the field of family studies.

The Vanier Institute of the Family was established in 1965 under the patronage of Their Excellencies Governor General Georges P. Vanier and Madame Pauline Vanier. It is a national voluntary organization dedicated to promoting the well-being of Canada's families through research, publications, public education and advocacy. The Institute regularly works with businesses, legislators, policy-makers and program specialists, researchers, educators, family service professionals, the media and members of the general public.

About the author

Kerry Daly is a Professor in the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition and Co-Director of the Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being at the University of Guelph. He received his PhD in Sociology from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. His research interests focus on the way that families deal with the demands of time in their lives. He is currently doing a study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council on the way that men and women, parents and children negotiate and organize their time for work, family and leisure. He is author of the recently published book Families and Time: Keeping Pace in a Hurried Culture. Previous research has focused on the changing meanings of fatherhood and a national study of adoption trends for Health Canada (Adoption in Canada, 1993, with Michael Sobol).

Aussi disponible en français

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: FAMILIES LIVING IN A HURRIED CULTURE.....	1
FORCES THAT HAVE SHAPED THE ACCELERATED PACE OF CHANGE	2
Families have changed	
The effects of technology	
Intensification of work	
BROADENING OUR CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF TIME: BEYOND COUNTING THE HOURS.....	5
Cyclical patterns	
Linear patterns	
Time as an organizational tool	
Time as values	
The politics of time	
Time as a changing and evolving concept	
TRENDS IN TIME USE	8
An overall increase in time stress	
Having children has a major impact on time use	
Family type effects on time use	
Gender disparities in time use associated with parenting	
The importance of employment status for understanding time crunch	
IMPLICATIONS OF THESE TIME TRENDS FOR UNDERSTANDING FAMILY DYNAMICS	16
A Gender Politics of Time in Families	
Children and Parents: Who controls time?	
The Politics of Finding and Preserving Family Time	
The ideals of family time	
The reality of family time	
The discordance between the ideal and the real	
SUMMARY	33
REFERENCES.....	35

It Keeps Getting Faster: Changing Patterns of Time in Families

Introduction: Families living in a hurried culture

Ever since Charlie Chaplan popularized the notion of being a cog in the wheel of the industrial machine in the film "Modern Times," we have lived with the idea that our everyday routines are hurried, regimented, and largely beyond our control. Urbanization and the taylorization of the workplace led to a feeling of being in a "rat race." Throughout it all, there is a nostalgic tug that draws us back to a longing for simpler times, when life was slower and uncomplicated. Hence, the notion of living in a hurried culture is not an altogether new one: the tension between the rapidity of change associated with modernity and the desire to preserve all that is wholesome and straightforward has been with us for a very long time indeed.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that in recent years the pace of change has accelerated dramatically. Advances in information technology, bio-genetic engineering and the globalization of the economy have created an ever-tightening spiral of development that has condensed evolutionary changes taking millions of years to a time scale that has biological and technological revolutions routinely occurring within our lifetime (Russell, 1992). The pace of change has risen exponentially.

Accordingly, there is a growing urgency about time in families. Terms like "time crunch," "time squeeze," "juggling" and "time famine" have entered into our everyday descriptions of family life. For many families, this perceived shortage of time has meant that their lives feel tyrannized by time at every turn. Responsibilities for work, family and community appear to gobble up every morsel of time that is available, leaving working parents feeling hopelessly caught at the end of every day in a recurring paradox between an angst about getting it all done and remorse that they have not done enough with their children and families. Anxiety about too much

to do and guilt about not using time according to the nagging shoulds of their family responsibilities are standard fare in the everyday experience of family life.

The demands of time are so paramount in families now that it is almost pure folly to think of families living without sophisticated scheduling tools. The family calendar, usually maintained by mothers, serves a critical and essential function in the family, ensuring a carefully orchestrated set of pick ups and drop offs. In the early morning hours, clock radios chime in unison throughout the household calling both adults and children to their individual temporal routines outside of the home. Where once families were more likely to live and work together in the household, their daily routine is now more akin to a ritual of dispersion with babies being called to the drop-off time for daycare, children to the schedules of school and virtually all parents to the demands of their paid work. At the end of the day, families re-converge on the household, only to face additional responsibilities that include meal preparation, homework, lessons, shopping and scheduling for the next day. The cumulative impact of these bloated schedules is that time has become a more urgent preoccupation in managing the many demands of contemporary work and family life.

Forces that have shaped the accelerated pace of change

Several forces are fueling this growing angst about the availability of time in families:

1. ***Families have changed.*** The massive entry of women into the paid labour force has meant that where once women dedicated their full energy to the running of a household, it is activity that awaits all family members after the demands of their paid work. Dual-earner couples are now the dominant family form in North America, and they face unprecedented demands in finding, protecting and negotiating time. Approximately 7 out of 10 married

of 10 married couples in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1995) are two earner families. Fourteen percent of all Canadian families are lone parent families, most of whom are mothers working in the paid labour force (Statistics Canada, 1995). Regardless of the type of family or their socio-economic status, the reality is that most Canadian families are "time poor." Whether they are a working class, two-parent family who works opposite shifts to cover their childcare responsibilities or a middle class lone-parent mother who can afford quality child care, the net effect is the same: too many responsibilities and not enough time. For all families with working parents, the high proportion of time given to paid employment generally means less time for family interaction, child care, home maintenance and leisure activities. Furthermore, as the Canadian population ages, the demands on families to provide care for aging parents will rise. The "caregiving crunch" will become more acute in light of the shrinking amount of time that is available for adult children to provide care to their aging parents (Martin Matthews & Rosenthal, 1993).

2. *The effects of technology.* Computers and technology have contributed to the acceleration of activity in all domains including work, leisure and private life with the result that speed and efficiency have become heralded cultural values. Technology creates a new kind of impatience. Microwave ovens made conventional ovens seem slow. Watching a movie with commercials is slow compared to taping the movie on the VCR and fast forwarding through the commercials. We have become jaded to the wonderment of computer technology and simply come to expect that there will be regular announcements about better and faster telecommunications. Technology gives rise to an intolerance for waiting and a desire for immediate results and gratification. High speed

networks, beepers and cellular phones give rise to the expectation of an immediate response thereby putting a finer edge on the meaning of punctuality.

3. ***Intensification of work.*** In contrast with predictions made 30 years ago that we would be a leisure society, the culture of over-work has flourished. In the face of changing work structures, downsizing, mergers and growing employment insecurity, families collectively are working more hours now than they ever have in the past. Although there are a number of important demographic variables that affect the number of hours in paid work, the overall picture is that people are working more and playing less. An analysis of national trends indicates that between 1981 and 1992, the paid work of employed Canadians aged 20-64 increased by 15% with a corresponding decline in their leisure time (-10%) and time for personal needs (-4.2%) (Zuzanek, Beckers & Peters, 1998). And the intensifying work ethic is not felt by adults alone: approximately one-half of 15-17 year old students report feeling under stress when they don't have enough time, and when they need more time, will cut back on their sleep (Frederick, 1995).

Broadening our conceptualizations of time: Beyond counting the hours

Time as we know it is a relatively recent invention. Mechanical clocks only took their place in the town belfry in the 14th century. During the industrial revolution, clocks came into their own as the instruments of production efficiency. Time was to be measured and counted in precise terms in order to evaluate work performance or activity that was being conducted. This sowed the seeds of our current tendency to think of time as money or something that can be spent, wasted, budgeted or squandered. The Protestant Work Ethic imposed a moral meaning to

time by equating the productive use of time with godliness. Thinking of time as a precious commodity is still the dominant way that we think about time in our culture. However, there are many other ways that we can think about time and how it is experienced in our lives. Hence before exploring some of the major time trends that affect families, it is useful to look at the many ways of thinking about time:

Cyclical patterns: Circular models of time are driven by nature. Time is viewed as a cycle of seasons, the cyclical rhythm of day and night and through the human cycle of birth and death. Prior to industrialized technology and the wide scale use of clocks, time was experienced as the repetitive periodicity of the weather, tides, seasons and the movement of the planets and the stars. For families, cyclical patterns of work and rest, planting and harvesting, celebration and mourning or growth and decay were, and in some ways still are, tied to the cycles of the natural world.

Linear patterns: Our orientation in everyday life is one of travelling through time with a wake of experience that we call the past and with a bow that cuts into the smooth surface of the future. Individuals and families have linear histories marked by a series of events including birthdays, deaths and anniversaries. While some of the rituals that are used to mark these events are repeatable and cyclical, they typically represent the idea of progression through time - a directionality of success (as in marriage anniversaries), maturity (as in birthdays) or accomplishment (as in graduations). In each of these, movement along a time line is the implicit focus of the celebration. Notions of aging, individual and family development are unidirectional in nature and assume a linear model

of time.

Time as an organizational tool: Time is also a structure that shapes, organizes and constrains the way that people act. Our complex society is only possible with time as an organizational tool. The schedule and the calendar are the central social conventions that organize time so that it can be collectively experienced. Thinking of time as a structure "out there" often gives rise to the feeling that time is beyond our control. Time is structured functionally and is used to control the flow of work, activities and involvement with others. Punctuality is the moral mechanism that maintains the orderly adherence to rigid time structures. Organizations have hours of operation which prescribe when individuals participate in them.

Time as values: To understand time as value is to examine the way that evaluative meanings are attached to time. Any decisions that are made about the allocation of time - whether it be to work in the garden or to go into the office on the weekend - implicitly involve grafting meaning or assigning value to the activity. The nature of the activity invokes questions and assessments about the value and importance of time allocation and expenditure. The effort to harmonize the demands of work, family and leisure raise many questions about the value of time and the choices that we make about time use.

The politics of time. As time becomes more scarce and precious, it also becomes more contentious and open to conflict and competing demands. We think of controlling time, or being controlled by time. A politics of time is concerned with our relative ability to

either manage and orchestrate time or to feel relatively powerless over time. It is also concerned with dealing with conflicts over time, competing interests with respect to time use and the negotiations that are a routine part of everyday family life.

Time as a changing and evolving concept: Although the actual duration of a minute or an hour has not changed since the invention of mechanical clocks, the way that those segments of time are experienced has changed rather dramatically in light of changing cultural conditions. For example, the speed of computers has refined the way that we measure time from minutes and hours to nanoseconds. Economically, globalization has uprooted time from its local meanings of "here and now" to an ever-moving flow of trade and exchange that never sleeps. With a growing appreciation for diversity in our culture, we understand that uniform quantities of time are experienced in a qualitatively uneven fashion. Hence the same hour can have very different meanings depending on age, gender, employment status, or ethnicity.

Trends in time use

Although the evidence indicates that overall Canadians are working more and having less time for leisure¹, it is important to examine the variations in this overall pattern. Unless otherwise noted, the following trends are drawn from the 1998 General Social Survey (Statistics Canada,

¹ The terms used in the following discussion are defined as follows:

Leisure time consists of time that is not allocated to personal care (sleep, eating, grooming) or paid or unpaid work. It is further broken down in the GSS survey to include socializing, active and passive leisure.

Average time is calculated on the basis of a 7 day week; as a result, an 8 hour day averaged over 5 days, will appear as 5.7 hours, averaged over 7 days.

Paid work includes all activities associated with market related work and includes commuting time.

Unpaid work includes household chores, family care, shopping and volunteer work.

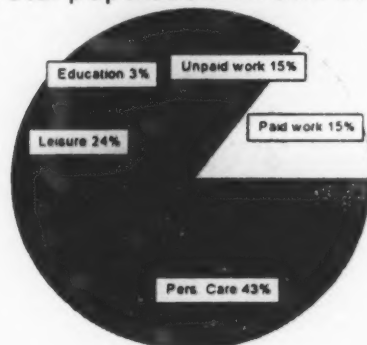
1999):

An overall increase in time stress:

- ▶ Compared to 1992, Canadians aged 15 and over reported higher levels of time stress in 1998. Those who agreed with 7 out of 10 questions about time stress were identified as severely time stressed. In 1998, 16% of men and 21% of women reported being time stressed, up from 12 and 16% respectively in 1992.
- ▶ In 1998, more people reported not having enough time for their family or friends compared with 1992.

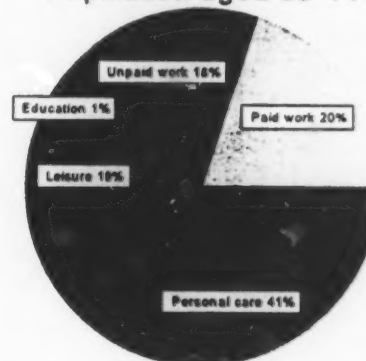
Activities over an average day

Total population 15 and over



Activities over an average day

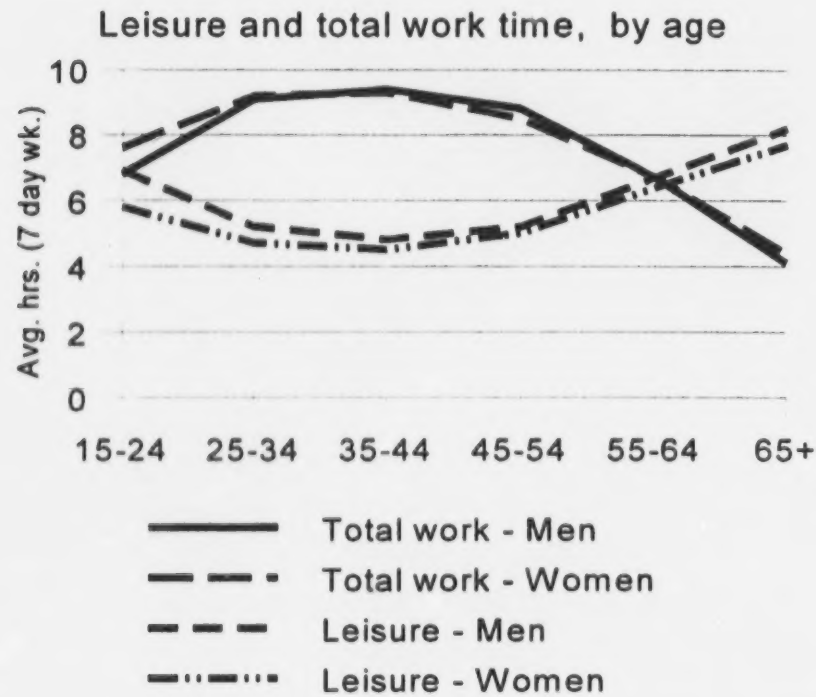
Population aged 35-44



People aged 25-44 are the most time crunched of all groups:

- ▶ When compared with all other age groups, people who are in the prime child bearing and rearing years devote the highest proportion of time to paid and unpaid work activities. The 35-44 age group spent 38% of each day on productive activities (a combination of paid and unpaid work) compared to 30% for the Canadian average (aged 15 and over). Those in the 25-34 age category were close behind with 36% of their time devoted to productive activities:
- ▶ Married parents, employed full-time, and single mothers employed full time, between the ages of 25 and 44 reported the highest levels of time stress. 26% of married fathers, 38% of married mothers and 38% of single mothers reported severe time stress. Just over half of men and women aged 25-44 felt they did not have enough time for family and friends.
- ▶ There was an increase of 2.0 hours per week in paid work activities since 1992 for 25-44 year old married parents employed full time. Overall, men averaged 48.6 hours and women averaged 38.8 hours per week of paid work.
- ▶ 35-44 year olds report the least amount of leisure time with men and women having 4.8 and 4.5 hours per day respectively.
- ▶ There is a curvilinear relationship between age and leisure time: 15-24 year olds spend an average of 7.2 hours per day in leisure activities which declines to a low of 4.7 hours per day for 35-44 year olds and then steadily rises to 8 hours per day for those who are over the age of 65.

- ▶ The leisure time curve mirrors very closely the time in total work (includes paid and unpaid work activity):

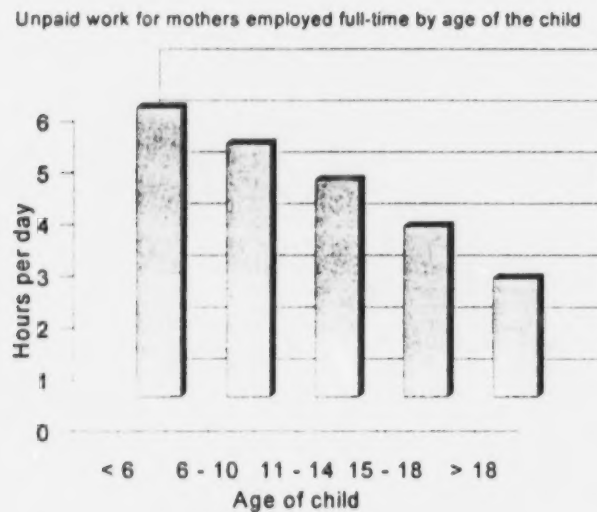


Having children has a major impact on time use:

- ▶ having children increases the total work load of full time employed parents in the 25-44 age group. Both married women and men increase the total number of hours given to paid and unpaid work (including a small proportion given to education) when they become parents: men increased their workload from 9.4 to 10.3 hours per day; women increased their workload from 9.6 to 10.5 hours per day
- ▶ both full time employed, married mothers and fathers (25-44) have on average

0.7 hours less leisure than their childless counterparts, although fathers have more leisure hours (4.2 per day) than mothers (3.6 hours per day). This gap in leisure hours between parents and non-parents has widened by .2 hours since 1992.

- ▶ the age of the child had an impact on the amount of time given to unpaid work:



For example, as indicated in the graph above, full time employed mothers devoted 5.6 hours a day when their child was under 6, declining to 2.3 hours when the children were older than 18 (Frederick, 1995, based on 1992 data).

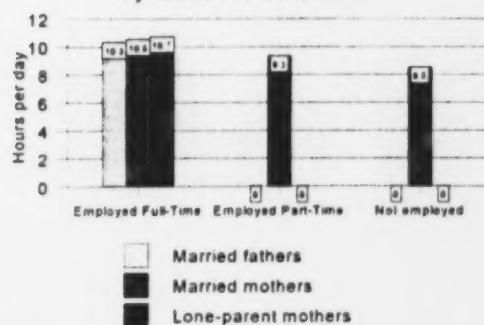
Family type effects on time use:

- ▶ lone parent mothers are similar to married mothers in the 25-44 age group. On average, among full time employed parents, lone-parent mothers spend 10.7 hours per day in total work (up from 9.6 in 1992), whereas married mothers commit 10.5 hours per day (up from 10.3 hours in 1992). Married fathers, employed full

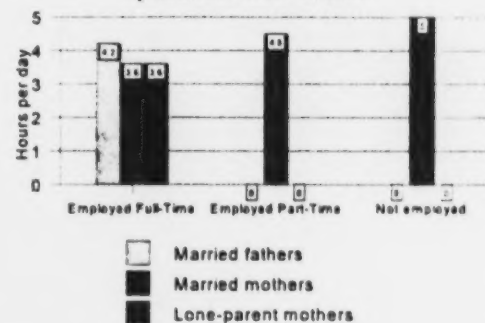
time have increased from 9.9 hours of total work per day in 1992 to 10.3 hours of total work in 1998.

- Married mothers in the 25-44 age category who work part-time devote 9.3 hours per day to total work.

Average daily total work, aged 25-44
by labour force status



Average daily total leisure, aged 25-44
by labour force status



Gender disparities in time use

- Married women without children (25-44) who are employed full-time do less paid work than married men without children (6.2 hours averaged over a 7 day week compared with 7.1 hours for men). Once they are parents, both full time women and men decreased their paid work and increased their unpaid work. However, whereas women reduced paid work by .7 hours per day, men decreased their paid work by only .2 hours per day. Full-time employed women increased their commitment to unpaid work (3.2 to 4.9 hours per day) whereas men increased less dramatically (2.3 to 3.3 hours per day).

- ▶ Women are most likely to make adjustments to their level of paid work when they become parents. Whereas men decreased their paid work week by about one and a half hours, mothers employed full time spent on average 5 hours less a week at paid work than fathers, in order to deal with the increased demands of the household. This reduction in time at paid work is less dramatic than 1992 when full time employed women reduced their paid work hours by an average of 9 hours.
- ▶ Although there has been a long standing gender disparity in the amount of time that mothers and fathers have devoted to unpaid activities, the overall trend is toward convergence. Based on an extensive review of the parental involvement literature, Pleck (1997) reports that whereas men spent only about one third the amount of time that women did being engaged with their children in the 60's and 70's, that figure has risen to approximately 44% in the 1990's. Furthermore, as higher numbers of women continue with paid employment after having children, both women and men are spending less time in housekeeping activities.
- ▶ Between 1992 and 1998, the proportion of men aged 25-44 who reported being time stressed increased at a faster rate than the proportion of women. Men increased from 16% to about 24%, whereas women increased from about 22% to 28%.

The importance of employment status for understanding time crunch:

- ▶ part-time work reduces time stress among people in the 25-44 age group: 38% of married mothers who work full-time were severely time stressed compared to

22% of married mothers who worked part-time.

- ▶ The overall effect of working full-time as a parent is that women reduce the overall amount of housework that they do. In order to cope with the continued demands of paid work, employed mothers (25-44) spend less time cooking and cleaning up (-.6 hours a day), less time on housekeeping chores (-.9 hours a day), and less time on childcare (-1.0 hours per day) than their non-employed counterparts (Frederick, 1995 based on 1992 data).
- ▶ Full time employed, married mothers and full-time employed single mothers (25-44) have the least amount of leisure time (3.6 hours a day each) . By comparison, mothers who worked part-time had 4.5 hours a day, and non-employed mothers had 5.0 hours a day.
- ▶ Full-time employed fathers (25-44) have more leisure (4.2 hours per day) than full time employed mothers or single mothers (3.6 hours each) but less than mothers who work part-time (4.5 hours per day) or non-employed mothers (5.0 hours per day).
- ▶ Full- time employed mothers in the 25-44 age category reported almost twice as much time stress² as full time employed non-parents (38% compared to 20%). For men, there is no difference in reported levels of time stress: 26% indicate high time stress before and after becoming a father. Whereas time stress for women working full time increased dramatically when they became parents, men's time stress did not.

² Time stress was measured in the social survey by asking 10 questions about time stress, including, for example: "Do you feel trapped by daily routine?" "Do you worry that you don't spend enough time with your family or friends?" "Do you consider yourself a workaholic?"

In summary:

- Although all families are living within a hurried culture, families with children living at home are the ones that are the most time crunched.
- Important gender differences exist in the degree to which men and women experience time stress in families. It is appropriate to think of "his" and "her" time in the family with the knowledge that:
 - in general, mothers continue to do more unpaid work in the home than fathers. Although this gap is most pronounced for married parents, aged 25-44, the pattern prevails throughout the life cycle
 - when both spouses are working full-time, women have less leisure
 - women continue to do most of the cooking and housekeeping, whereas men are more likely to do maintenance and repairs
 - women report higher levels of time stress than men in the years of raising a family.
- Part-time work is a strategy commonly used by women for reducing time stress. It provides more time for dealing with the high demands of caring for children and meeting the demands of the household.
- Employment status has a major impact on the amount of leisure time that is available:
 - full-time employed mothers, whether single or married have the least amount of leisure time and are the most likely to report severe levels of time stress
 - in traditional breadwinner families, fathers employed full time have less leisure time than their wives who are not employed.

- Not counting the period of youth, men consistently have more leisure time than women in similar situations over every stage of the life cycle (an average of approximately 0.4 hours per day). This gap appears to be narrowing, however, for in 1992 this gap was closer to one hour per day.

Implications of these time trends for understanding family dynamics

The acceleration of our culture and the establishment of the dual-earner family as the dominant family form has given rise to a new politics of time. Although the politics of the globe has traditionally focused on the defense of spatial boundaries, the escalating spiral of change has meant that the politics of temporality is taking its place next to the politics of territory (Rifkin, 1987). As time becomes more scarce and more valuable, there are more conflicts - both within families and between families and the broader social order - about time control, allocations to meet responsibilities and entitlements to leisure time.

The idea that time is controlled within families rests on several assumptions. First, in contrast with our everyday operating assumptions that clock time is uniform, linear, continuous, objective and quantitative, time is experienced with different meanings and susceptible to varied interpretation. For example, parents and children stand in a different relationship to time because of their unique biography, history and social status. Second, time is a fundamental medium through which individuals express their values. Hence, when parents choose to work part-time in order to better balance their work and family responsibilities, they are expressing values and priorities through these decisions about time. When parents and children have disagreements or tensions about how time is to be used, they are expressing different values and beliefs about how time may be used. Finally, time is susceptible to varying levels of possession

since it is an object of negotiation and exchange. When people work within organizations, they exchange their discretion over time for money, and in so doing, time becomes a commodity that is susceptible to the relations of power and control. When children attend school, they surrender some of their own freedom over time in order to comply with the institutional mandate to educate and socialize. Like other valued commodities, time is an inherently scarce resource that must be managed, controlled and protected from unwanted exploitation. It is in this regard that time is inherently political and open to the dynamics of possession, negotiation and control.

Three key issues are addressed in this section: the gender politics of time as it gets played out within families; the intergenerational dynamics of control between parents and children; and the politics of creating, managing and protecting family time in the face of a demanding work environment that champions speed and efficiency.

A Gender Politics of Time in Families

As the above trends would suggest, there are many disparities and conflicts that women and men experience over time. Within dual earner families, both women and men strive for full participation in both paid and unpaid work responsibilities. Nevertheless, they both carry residual values and expectations from the past. According to current cultural norms, women are expected to be committed to their paid work just like men, while at the same time, they are expected to maintain a priority to family. By today's standards, fathers face a similar contradiction: men are expected to be committed to family just like women while at the same time, they have carried over a residual set of values that has kept them locked in as primary providers in the family. As this would suggest, a politics of time is not a simple matter of incompatible time allocations that

arise from the demands of family and work, but involves a range of competing and often contradictory values that underlie the decisions that women and men make about time.

In spite of dramatic changes in the number of women in the paid labour force, it would appear that there are still strong residues of the traditional division of labour. While there is less asymmetry in the world of paid work than there once was, men typically still spend more time on the job. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, women contribute, on average, less than one-third of the family income. The implication is that women continue to give priority to their families and men continue to give precedence to their work. Continuing gender discrepancies in pay and job status indicate that women's time is still devalued and men enjoy greater advantages in the control of their time. One implication of this is that family responsibilities for women are more likely to "spill-over" into their work time, resulting in more day-to-day tensions in the management of the work-family balance. This has resulted in women having to be more adaptable than men in meeting the care needs of their children. Women are more likely than men to arrange their work schedules in a way that will accommodate the demands of family caregiving.

Within the domestic sphere, men are increasing their commitment to the tasks of housework and childcare, but women continue to do the majority of these tasks. Employment status is an important variable for understanding the distribution of household chores: employed mothers devote significantly less time to household work than do non-employed mothers. Time devoted to employment seems to reduce the amount of time that is available for household work. In light of the acceleration of time that accompanies the increased work load in families, women have become the "time and motion" experts in families. Women are more likely than men to carry responsibility for both routine and emergency scheduling in the family. This is consistent

with the traditional division of household tasks which indicates that women take responsibility for the daily reproduction of family life while more of men's housework time is spent on the long term maintenance of the home or the car. The major consequence of this difference is that men have more discretion in the allocation and distribution of their household time. Women have responded to the demands of the double day with a variety of strategies including extending the hours of the day, doubling activity in the same period of time, or eliminating chores altogether.

When men do increase their contributions to work in the domestic sphere, it is usually in terms of time spent interacting with the children. Men have increased their responsibility to participate in child care activities while women have held a steady course in their responsibility for both child care and household work. While the research indicates that men are committed to increasing their share of domestic work, it would appear that they feel constrained in their efforts to do so. Many forces come into play in perpetuating the discrepancies between the domestic work of men and women: real time constraints imposed by the demands of work; beliefs about mothering and competence in the household; and the constraining effects of what constitutes a display of appropriate gender behaviour.

Trends with respect to leisure time indicate that *employed* women have the least amount of leisure time, non-employed women have the most and employed men seem to fall somewhere between. In spite of these differences in the amount of time, there appear to be dramatic differences for men and women in their respective entitlements to use leisure time as they wish to use it. In light of the fact that domestic labour is most likely to be seen as women's work, the demands of household responsibilities are more likely to intrude on women's leisure time. This is especially the case for women who are full time housewives. While they typically have the greatest amount of leisure time, they have the greatest difficulty separating that leisure time from

their domestic work. By contrast, employment seems to legitimize the right to leisure for women because in addition to having control over money, they are better able to compartmentalize their day to include leisure. Nevertheless, men continue to see leisure as a right whereas women, regardless of employment status, experience considerably more ambivalence about their entitlement to leisure.

Studies of gender distributions in time use over the life span suggest the disparities in the use of time begin early on in the life cycle and continue into old age. While the research points to a nearly universal leisure disadvantage for women throughout the life cycle, there are some indications that both women and men experience very limited amounts of leisure during the early stages of parenting. Ironically, breadwinner fathers, who are often thought of as having the greatest time advantages, seem to have less leisure time than their counterparts in dual-earner families.

Persistent gender disparities in the responsibilities and entitlements associated with time draw our attention to the political essence of time use. Inequality, conflict and differential entitlements continue to lie at the root of the experience of time for women and men in families.

Children and Parents: Who controls time?

Our traditional way of thinking about time in families is to place parents as the masters of the schedule and children as the compliant ones who are to be taught the rules of punctuality and organization. In this light, we have thought of children's time as being highly structured, monitored and controlled by the timetables set up by adults. This is in contrast to romanticized notions that childhood is a period of unencumbered free time. For the developing child, the

temporal limits of activities are gradually modified from physiological needs to conventional patterns (Moore, 1963). From early on, children are taught to be punctual and to exercise self-constraint in relation to time (Elias, 1992). In the process, children learn the fundamental time values of the Western world: "be on time" and "use your time wisely." As children grow older, there are more intergenerational conflicts around timetables where children increasingly want privileges while parents wish to maintain control (Roth, 1963).

One of the manifestations of the control that parents exercise over their children is found in the "hurried child syndrome" (Elkind, 1981). At a time when wage earning single parents and dual earner families are the norm, there is an inevitable conflict between the pace of a child's life and the imposed pace of a parent's schedule. In this regard, time awareness in the family can be like a collective bargaining agreement whereby "children gradually learn to ignore their own natural rhythms... and absorb the messages and attitudes about time sent by their busy parents" (Erkel, 1995, p. 36). When stress induces parents to put their own needs ahead of children's, then children are expected to adapt to adult schedules and timetables rather than adults adapting themselves to the pace of childhood (Elkind, 1981).

As more women have entered into the paid labour force in recent years, there has also been a tendency for the institutional control of children's time to shift downward. While it is taken for granted that children's time is highly scheduled and controlled at the elementary school level, it is a more recent phenomenon that the preschool child is exposed to a more regimented day. As a result, there is a tendency to hurry very young children in the same way that older children have been hurried.

The bureaucratic control of children's time is "stretching its arms beyond the public arena of schooling" into children's leisure time (Qvortrup, 1991, p. 29). The activities of children after

school have become more structured due to the work commitments of both parents. The formal organization of children's leisure time into after-school programs, sports, and lessons of all sorts results in the further regulation of their time. Even summer camps have shifted to more specialized forms of training for children including training programs in languages, computers or tennis. This control over their time amounts to a "planned spontaneity" that excludes children from experiencing through their own explorations in favour of an organized experience of time that is "motivational, structured and role-oriented" (Qvortrup, 1991, p. 29). The problem, according to Elkind (1981), is that children need the opportunity to play their own games, make up their own rules and abide by their own timetable and adult intervention interferes with the crucial learning that goes on when children express this autonomy.

The effort on the part of parents to control their children's time ironically results in a control of their own time (Qvortrup, 1991). As the temporal demands on parents intensify, children are more likely to be seen as time consuming objects. This is particularly acute in light of the fact that parenting standards have risen at the same time. In the days when families were large and parenting psychology was not part of the mass media, children helped to parent each other while parents got on with the job of getting the housework done and the money brought home. For today's families, there is a new kind of diligence required in parenting. Children must be monitored for their safety from the perceived dangers of abduction or crime. Parents now are expected to play with their children, invest quality time in their development, be involved in their schooling and overall ensure that they are spending sufficient time with their children. Even when parents send their children to day care, the expectation is that the "responsible" parent will invest a good deal of time exploring options and monitoring quality. The effect, however, of

these rising standards of parent care is that parent's time is increasingly controlled by the demands of their children.

Getting children to do housework provides a good example of children controlling parents time. The time that parents commit to ensuring that their children complete household chores is often perceived to exceed the amount of time that it would take to complete the chores themselves (Zelizer, 1985). The message here is that the time spent socializing children to do housework involves a time commitment of the parenthood role that is greater than the time that might be freed up by virtue of the child completing the task. Nevertheless, controlling children's time in this way is perceived by parents to be part of their moral responsibility to their children. In a study which examined why parents ask their children to do housework, White & Brinkerhoff (1987) found that the actual work accomplished was a secondary consideration and that it was for the children's benefit that they assigned them chores. For approximately three-quarters of the sample of parents, doing chores "builds character, develops responsibility and helps children learn" (White & Brinkerhoff, 1987, p. 210). The actual amount of household work that children do has been referred to as "negligible" with children under the age of 19 averaging 3 to 6 hours per week (Demo & Acock, 1993).

In some of my own research, I have sought to explore the dynamics of control between parents and children as it operates in relation to the family's experience of time (see Thorpe & Daly, 1999). The traditional view of time in families is that it operates in a hierarchical, unidirectional fashion: children's time is highly structured, monitored, and controlled by the timetables set up by adults, and children, for the most part, are seen as relatively passive. The data from this qualitative study of 15 dual earner and 10 single parent families suggest that there

are a number of ways that children control the time of their parents, while at the same time being controlled by decisions that parents make.

As described throughout the analysis, parenting was an all encompassing experience in the lives and times of the participants. We used the term "*parented time*" to describe the all encompassing experience of structuring and organizing time to meet the needs and expectations of their children. Fundamental to the experience of *parented time* is the dialectic that exists between parents being "in control" of time within the family, and yet being controlled by the responsibilities involved in caring for their children. Although it appears that the control over time is unidirectional insofar as the caregiver is seen as the one who makes decisions about the allocation of time, caring relationships require reconciling a number of time demands that arise from all family members who are involved. For example, one single mom described the experience of driving her children around and trying to "fit it all in". Ironically, while she was in the driver's seat, she talked about being driven by the endless list of demands that are placed on her by her parenting responsibilities.

When we asked parents directly about who controls time in the families, there was a deep ambivalence expressed about their own control of the family timetable and a strong assertion that their children's activities, needs and schedules were the prime mover in the family system. From the time that they first experienced becoming a parent, they had the experience of redefining time in the service of children. This involved relinquishing some control over the decisions they made about their own time use. It also involved living the tension between their own efforts to structure and control the way that their children used their time and the experience of being controlled by the obligation and responsibility to their children's schedules. The data strongly suggest that with respect to the critical dimension of controlling time in families, children play a

strong and determining role in the organization of family time. Control over time in these families was characterized as a dialectical interplay that involved negotiating and reconciling, on a daily basis, competing demands, contradictions and needs between children and parents.

The Politics of Finding and Preserving Family Time

In the face of mounting responsibilities and growing time scarcity, family time is at once precious and evasive. As a result, efforts to find and preserve family time present many families with the enormous challenge of guarding the boundary against the hungry temporal demands of their work and community. Parents are at war on a daily basis as they endeavour not only to meet all their responsibilities for work, caregiving, and the household, but to hold on to some precious time that they can call their own.

Although our current ideals of family time tend to coalesce around notions of family togetherness and solidarity, this has not always been the case. In the 19th century, for example, community togetherness during key celebrations was viewed as a much more important source of fulfilment than spending time alone in families. Occasions such as Thanksgiving and Christmas were more focused on attending parties and dances than in celebrating family solidarity (Coontz, 1992). Indeed, it would seem that families are continuously creating and maintaining the myth that families in the past were more concerned with maintaining custom and tradition and did a much better job of holding on to "quality family time" that is currently seen as being so threatened and under seige. (Gillis, 1996). Through a careful analysis of the history of family time, Gillis (1996) raises the spectre that there was never a "golden age" of family time when families realized the cherished ideals of togetherness.

As these historical analyses would suggest, "family time" is coloured by some of the ideological debates that are carried out with respect to the family itself. In the same way that families of the past have been romanticized and idealized, so too has "family time." In the same way that "family values" are championed as a political touchstone, so too is the investment in, and preservation of, family time put forward as the epitome of moral fortitude. The hegemonic view of family time reflects the romanticized version of family life through its emphasis on the importance of intact families spending "quality" time together that enhances their collective well-being. Even when the concession is made that there is a diversity of family structure and experience, family time is still held out as a central ideal. As this would suggest, family time is not only a descriptive term that offers a perspective on some aspect of family togetherness, it is a prescriptive term that directs families to act in certain ways. Consistent with this, Gillis (1996) has suggested that everyone lives in two families: one that they *live with* and one that they *live by*.

In response to the fast pace of technology and the dramatic increase of women in the paid labour force, family time has been idealized as the private still point in an otherwise frenzied life pattern. For example, many work/life initiatives are premised on the assumption that employees want to spend more time with their families. This is rooted in a cultural attitude that work is a greedy institution that takes too much of our time with the result that family gets too little. When family time is assigned the label of scarcity, then it is automatically elevated to a position of greater demand. As a consequence of this "demand mentality," people appear to be engaged in an endless pursuit of family time: parents complain that they don't have enough of it; politicians leave their positions claiming they will commit more of their lives to it; and companies develop work-life strategies that will help their employees gain access to more of it. Indeed, national

surveys in both Canada (Frederick, 1995) and the United States (Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998) indicate that the majority of employed mothers and fathers feel they do not have enough time to spend with their families.

Embedded in this pursuit of family time is a set of unanalyzed and problematic assumptions: We assume that we know what "family time" is; we assume that there is some kind of uniformity of experience associated with it; and we assume that it is equally desirable for all members of the family. Hochschild (1997) gave us pause when she upturned our beliefs about what people were really pursuing in their lives when she reported that a significant portion of her sample were not pursuing refuge by spending time with their families, but rather, by spending time at work. For approximately 20% of her sample, work time, not family time, was the valued occasion for feeling like their life had some order, companionship and support. This is consistent with other research which indicates women have a more positive experience of paid work than activities in the home sphere (Barnett & Rivers, 1998; Larson, Richards and Perry-Jenkins, 1994). This was an enormously important finding - not because it indicated that work was more important than family, but because it shook at the foundational, taken for granted belief that family time is something that we all universally aspire to have more of.

It was within the context of these ideas that I became interested in examining the way that women and men in different kinds of families talk about the meaning of family time. Based on interviews with 28 dual-earner and single parent families, I explored the relationship between people's expectations and experiences with respect to family time. Hence, questions were asked about memories, hopes, ideals, and everyday experiences. Three categories emerged from the data regarding the ideals of family time: the social production of memories, happy togetherness and valuing spontaneity.

The ideals of family time: The pursuit of family time was colored by a quest to find an experience of family togetherness that was typically rooted in their past. When I asked questions about what family time means to people or what their ideal family time would be, their answers were often nostalgic in nature. People talked about "wanting to carry on traditions," "remembering fondly the times when they used to play board games together" or remembering how their "parents would sit around after a big meal and tell stories by candlelight." It wasn't so much the actual content of these memories that seemed to matter; rather what seemed to have greater urgency was the felt obligation that they honour their parent's traditions through the manufacture of their own traditions for their children. In this regard, it was the nostalgic mood or the memory itself that seemed paramount - for it seemed to anchor them to a secure past. The data suggested that there was a kind of preoccupation that these families had in the manufacture of a positive experience of family time that both they and their children could remember. The pleasure of family time was not in the present moment, but was expected to be available as a kind of dividend somewhere down the road.

The meanings that were given to family time represented a set of beliefs about what family time should be and what families should do. Two gold standards emerged in these data with respect to family time: togetherness and a positive valence. Regardless of the type of family structure, parents talked about their yearning for happy togetherness in their experience of family time. Critical in this regard was not only being together but *wanting* to be together.

One of the most commonly expressed expectations for family time was that it be spontaneous and unscheduled. Due in large part to the highly scheduled nature of their lives, these parents emphasized the importance of family time that would bring them together in a way that was gracefully natural and unconstrained. Furthermore, it was an experience that because of

its very spontaneity was considered more genuine or authentic and as a result, more affirming of their family relationships. Within the context of highly scheduled lives, family time was valued for the antithetical qualities of spontaneity and non-demand. Parents talked about the importance of simply being with one another in some way or another in the absence of obligations to be somewhere else, dress a certain way, or do some things. For example, they emphasized the importance of protected "down times" on the weekends because it was then that they could sleep in, not go to childcare, eat with mom and dad, have late breakfast, play, and watch TV. In short, they too valued the opportunity to get off schedule and be with their family.

The reality of family time: The most common lament associated with the experience of family time was that there was never enough. Even children, when asked about this during their circle time at day care, echoed their parents lament that they don't seem to have enough time together. One mother reflected in the interview that their lives seem to be speeding along and when she reflected on the last couple of weeks, she felt like she had hardly seen her children. Inasmuch as family time was critically important to them, there was a feeling that they were somehow missing it.

For many parents, there were very strong tones of obligation that entered into their discussion about having family time. Often in the same breath, they spoke about how critically important family time was, but how difficult it was to orchestrate on any kind of regular basis. They wanted the positive togetherness of family time, but often felt tired at the end of their day from their paid work and felt the need to be geared up in order to deal with all of the responsibilities on the home front. In the midst of multiple demands and responsibilities, family time took on the tone of obligation as something they *should* try to fit in over the course of their busy day. This sense of obligation was often justified by making reference to the multiple

demands that they experienced for their time. For example, a full-time employed single mother with two children at home commented how she felt selfish when she was unable to give out anything more to anyone at the end of the day and looked forward to putting her children to bed.

Many of these parents talked about the creation of family time for the sake of their children. It was in this respect that parents' needs, desires for and satisfactions from family time were secondary to an assessment of their children's needs and satisfactions. In this regard, the reality of family time for most of these parents involved conceding to their children. With a kind of sacrificial tone, many parents talked about the importance of family time in order to make the children happy now, and that their time for more selfish pursuits would come later.

The discordance between the ideal and the real: The descriptions of actual family time that were given by these families did not line up very well with their own ideals for what family time should be. The construction of family time for these families was based on the expectations of togetherness, positive engagement and future gratification. While these expectations were very much a part of their everyday language of family time, they tended to be more reflective of an ideal than a reality. Rarely did they have enough family time, when they did, they tended to emphasize the effort that was required to pull it off, and for the most part, the effort was seen as being of primary benefit to children.

The discordance between their ideals and experiences of family time meant that many of these parents lived in a state of chronic guilt. They expressed guilt because they were working, guilt because they did not spend enough time with their children, guilt for getting babysitters, guilt for being too tired when they were with their children and guilt when they were too busy. As a result of their difficulty in being able to reduce the number of competing demands for their time, many talked about learning to live with the guilt that they could not change. Although these

parents talked about the demands of work and childcare being largely beyond their control, they didn't talk about changing the ideals that they have for family time. The ideals of spontaneity, togetherness and positive experience seemed to go unchallenged. In order to reduce the discordance between the real and the ideal of family time, then, either the realities of family demands or the ideals of family time need to change. The dominant cultural response is for parents to at least think about doing less, even though few seem to be successful in following through on this. However, if parents are unable to change the nature of their demands in order to come closer to the ideal, then it leads one to question whether the ideals themselves need to be opened to re-examination.

Summary

Families are facing unprecedented demands in their time use. The proliferation of technology has created impatience, an intolerance for slowness and expectation of instantaneous response. Contrary to expectations that we would have more leisure, the work ethic has intensified. Families are both caught by, and contribute to a cult of busy-ness that seems only to intensify.

It is tempting for family members to think of these time stresses as "personal troubles" (Mills, 1959) that are capable of such private solutions like better time management or an electronic palm organizer. Indeed, there are many choices about time in the course of a day that could help to alleviate some of the time crunch that families feel. Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of some of these stresses, especially among full time employed parents in the 25-44 age category, suggests that this is not just a personal trouble, but a systemic dilemma that requires a public response. To this end, it is instructive to be aware that other countries, most notably in Europe,

are much more deliberate about actively discouraging the culture of overwork. A variety of approaches are being used to reduce and redistribute work time including legislation, tax incentives, collective bargaining and a variety of leaves for social, education and family needs (Hayden, n.d.). For example, France and Italy have taken the lead in legislating the 35 hour work week supported by tax incentives and fines. Collective bargaining by steel and iron-working unions in Germany have been successful in reducing work weeks to 35 hours in the last decade with current efforts seeking to further reduce the work week to 32 hours. In Belgium and the Netherlands, the 35 hour work week has been successfully negotiated by unions in many of the main industries. Here in North America, there has been little attention given to the question of work reduction at the legislative level. However, many companies have become more attentive to work-family policies and practices in order to be more responsive to the time stresses experienced by working families.

Time use in families has become increasingly political - both within families and between families and the work organizations of which they are a part. The battles of time must be waged on two fields: first, by all individuals on a daily basis involving choices about what they value in life; and second, in the public arena of social policy and the workplace in order to question, challenge and develop a set of cultural practices and values that are aimed at alleviating the time stress in families.

References

- Barnett, R.C. & Rivers, C. (1998). She works, he works: How two income families are happy, healthy and thriving. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bond, James T., Galinsky, E. & Swanberg, J.E. (1998). The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce. New York: The Families and Work Institute.
- Coontz, S. (1992). The way we never were. New York: Basic Books.
- Daly, K. (1996). Families and Time: Keeping Pace in a Hurried Culture. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Demo, D. & Acock, A. (1993). Family diversity and the division of domestic labour. Family Relations, 42, 323-331.
- Elias, Norbert. (1992). Time: An essay. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Elkind, David. (1981). The hurried child: Growing up too fast too soon. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Erkel, R.T. (1995). Time shifting. Family Therapy Networker, 19, 33-39.
- Frederick, J.A. (1995). As time goes by: Time use of Canadians. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- Gillis, J. (1996). A world of their own making. New York: Basic Books.
- Hayden, A. (n.d.) Europe's new movement for work time reduction. Canadian labour Congress Research Paper #13.
- Hochschild, A. (1989). The second shift. New York: Avon Books.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1997). The time bind: When work becomes home and home becomes work. New York: The Henry Holt and Company.

- Jacobs, J. & Gerson, K. (1998). Who are the overworked Americans? Review of Social Economy, 4, 442-459.
- Larson, R.W., Richards, M.H., & Perry-Jenkins, M. (1994). Divergent worlds: The daily emotional experience of mothers and fathers in the domestic and public spheres. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67, 1034-1046.
- Martin Matthews, A. & Rosenthal, C. (1993). Balancing work and family in an aging society: The Canadian experience. In G.L. Maddox and M.P. Lawton (Eds.), Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics, pp. 96-119. New York: Springer.
- Mills, C.W. (1959). The sociological imagination. London: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, Wilbert E. (1963). Man, time and society. New York: John Wiley.
- Pleck, J. (1996). Paternal involvement: Levels, sources and consequences. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.) The role of the father in child development. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Qvortrup, Jens. (1991). Childhood as a social phenomenon - An introduction to a series of national reports. In M. Bardy, J. Qvortrup, G. Sgritta & H. Wintersberger (Eds.) Childhood as a social phenomenon. Vienna, Austria: European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.
- Rifkin, J. (1987) Time wars: The primary conflict in human history. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Roth, J.A. (1963). Timetables: Structuring the passage of time in hospital treatment and other careers. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc.
- Russell, P. (1992). The white hole in time: Our future evolution and the meaning of now. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Statistics Canada, (1995). General Social Survey. Ottawa.

Statistics Canada, (1999). *Overview of the time use of Canadians in 1998*. Ottawa. Catalogue no. 12F0080XIE.

Thorpe, K. & Daly, K. (1999). Children, Parents and Time: The Dialectics of Control. In C. Sheehan (Ed.) Through the eyes of the child: Revisioning children as active agents of family life. New York: JAI Press.

White, L.K. & Brinkerhoff (1987). Children's work in the family: Its significance and meaning. In N. Gerstel & H. E. Gross (Eds.) Families and work. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. pp. 204-218.

Zelizer, V.A. (1985). Pricing the priceless child: The changing social value of children. New York: Basic Books.

Zuzanek, J. Beckers, T. & Peters, P. (1998). The harried class revisited: Dutch and Canadian trends in the use of time from the 1970s to the 1990s. Leisure Studies, 17, 1-19.